

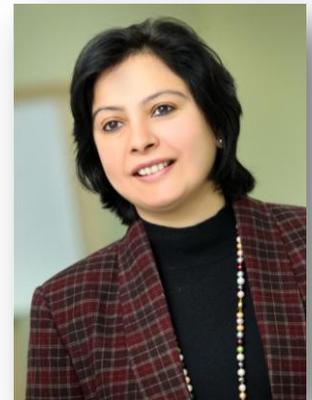
Communicating to Spark the Magic Connect

Deciding *what* to communicate is important. But deciding *how* to communicate makes all the difference between speaking and being heard. Communicating in the right way is the key to ensuring that you have touched, moved and inspired your listeners in the ways you so wish.

Ways and means to communicate and the thinking about this topic have evolved over the last century. The 20th century was all about mass production, led by the U.S. auto industry. Henry Ford was one of the first to apply assembly line manufacturing to the mass production of affordable automobiles. He focussed on pushing his cars through the dealer/retail channel and deeply discounting what wasn't selling. Advertising and communication was broad based, mass produced and impersonal. The famous remark made by Henry Ford in the earlier part of the 20th Century reflected this attitude.- 'Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black'.

The world has come a long way from those early days of mass production. The swing in the 21st Century is towards mass customisation - about getting people what they want, not forcing them to settle for *less* than they want. No longer does one size fit all! It is now customers who drive demand and pull products into the channel. Increasingly organisations are building products for an individual customer within a previously-decided range of options. They are integrating mass production and standardization principles with customization. The prime example of this is Dell with its 'Made-To-Order System'. Not far behind are mobile phone makers like Apple with the I-Phone and its many customised 'apps', and McDonalds and the 'aalu McTikki' - a tasty example of the Indian veggie preferences transforming the 'ham' in the hamburger. In the auto world, General Motors, Chrysler, Toyota and others are experimenting and effectively implementing this process in their production and operations facilities.

Seeing the target audience as a segment of one, and communicating with each one in ways that will touch, move and inspire has become



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increasingly more important. The standards of communication have moved and so has the expertise that is required to chisel the message. Every 8 year old with a laptop and a mouse can produce a home video, exponentially better than the black and white movies of yesteryear. It is easy to produce multimedia messages, and create a sensory overload with pictures, music, videos, digital imaging, internet, social networking sites and interactive applications.

Yet this overload of noise, music, messaging and communication creates clutter and the communicator who has paid big bucks to broadcast his message is subject to the tyranny of the remote control, the del key and the ear plugs. *Knowing what will actually touch and connect with your target audience is the key to crafting a relevant message which is actually heard.* In this age of mass customization and multi-sensory experiences knowing how to create value for your brand and really connect with your multiple and diverse audiences is the key to successful brand communication.

It is important to focus on two things. One is the brand itself, its values and the complex brand personality that exists. And the second the chosen recipients to whom this brand value is to be communicated. I find that studying both sides makes it easier to increase the relevance and salience of the value of the brand in the eyes of these chosen people, and build an emotional connect. Over my many years of experience I have discovered that sometimes communication works very well and sometimes it fails miserably. And the instance when it works is when both the speaker (the brand) and the listener (the target audience) form an emotional connect.

Let me illustrate this with an example. In this era of holistic health we distinguish between inner beauty and cosmetic beauty. An enduring relationship is built not through shallow courtship but when there is a true emotional connect between two people. Building that emotional connect requires empathy and understanding. An ad agency or communication expert can create words, but words alone, not backed by

understanding, are insufficient. Enduring movies, books and music are the ones which touch the human core. My brother, a counsellor explained that there is a language of love and that every individual has his own way that he likes to express love and receive it. And enduring relationships are built on a deep understanding of this.

Communication bridges the space between two entities. In developing the message and the medium we are often focussed only on the bridge. We forget that the bridge connects two points and that every bridge differs from the other because no two points are the same. Understanding the two points to be connected is the key to building a successful bridge. If our communication bridge connects the two points correctly, our communication will spark the emotional connect creating magic!

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Fulki Communications Private Limited

Specialists in enhancing the perception of the value of a brand in the eyes of a chosen audience.